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Jesus Christ

# JESUS, HUMAN AND DIVINE

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(BAMPTON LECTURE FOR 1915)

# JESUS
# HUMAN AND DIVINE.

THREE SERMONS
TOGETHER WITH A
THEOLOGICAL ESSAY

BY

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# PREFACE

In the month of August of last year I read at the Cambridge Conference of Modern Churchmen a paper on "Christ as Logos and Son of God." This paper and others which were read at the same time created a considerable newspaper controversy. They were grossly, and in some cases I fear wilfully, misrepresented. Many newspapers announced to the world that I and other clergymen had "denied the Divinity of Christ"; and eminent ecclesiastics who should have known better proceeded to fulminate anathemas on the assumption that the report was true. On my return to Carlisle I thought it desirable to preach two sermons on two successive Sunday evenings, September 11 and 18, explaining what I had said and what I really think in as simple language as it is

possible to use about the extremely difficult and complicated formulæ which the Church has handed down to us. I have thought it well to publish them, and hope that they may be of use in showing that, while the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ has come to us in a form which is the product of Greek metaphysical speculation, it represents a truth which can be translated into the language of ordinary modern thought, and which is of eternal value and significance. I have avoided as much as possible the use of technical terms, and have resisted the temptation to reply to the objections which theologians and others have made or will make. I have added another sermon, which is a plea for a more candid treatment of intellectual difficulties, and was delivered on the Sunday before the Birmingham Church Congress in the parish church of Solihull, near Birmingham.

The sermons were intended for a different kind of audience from that to which the original paper was addressed, and I had originally intended to publish the sermons

alone. It was, however, represented to me by my publisher and others that it would be desirable to reprint also the paper to which the sermons refer—if only to guard against the suggestion that I wished to disguise or go back upon anything that I had said in that paper. I have accepted this advice, in spite of the objection that such a course necessarily involves a certain amount of repetition.

I sincerely trust this little volume may help any open-minded Christians who may have been disturbed or perplexed either by what I was falsely reported to have said or by what I actually did say. I am afraid it is too much to hope that it will put an end to the systematic campaign of misrepresentation which is still being carried on by writers and speakers who vaguely accuse me of contradicting the Catholic faith, without making the smallest attempt to indicate the points on which I have done so. But I hope that it may be of some small help to a few of those who really wish to discover the truth about the supreme

revelation of God which has been made to us in the life, teaching, and personality of our Lord Jesus Christ.[1]

H. RASHDALL.

THE DEANERY, CARLISLE.
*Jan.* 1, 1922.

[1] The paper (with the notes) is reprinted from the *Modern Churchman* of Sept. 1921. I am indebted to the Editor for his kind permission to reprint it so soon after the original publication.

# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| CHRIST AS LOGOS AND SON OF GOD . | 11 |
| I. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST . . | 27 |
| II. THE WORD OF GOD . . . | 49 |
| III. THE GREATEST NEED OF THE CHURCH . . . . | 71 |

# JESUS
## HUMAN AND DIVINE

### CHRIST AS LOGOS AND SON OF GOD [1]

THERE is, I think, a growing demand that Liberal Theologians should say in quite definite terms what they really mean when they use the traditional language about the "Divinity of Christ." It is not easy to do this in twenty-five minutes, but I will try. I trust you will forgive the appearance of dogmatism which must be involved in such a summary statement of conclusions, without much argument or defence, as is possible under the conditions prescribed for the present discussion.

In the first place it will be well to enumerate some of the things which we do not and cannot mean by ascribing Divinity to Christ.

(1) Jesus did not claim Divinity for Himself. He may have called Himself, or more probably

[1] This paper is printed exactly as it was delivered.

allowed Himself to be called, the Messiah or Son of God. But never in any critically well-attested sayings is there anything which suggests that His conscious relation to God was other than that of a man towards God—the attitude which He wished that all men should adopt towards God. The speeches of the Fourth Gospel, where they go beyond the Synoptic conception, cannot be regarded as history, valuable as they may be for theology.[1] The doctrine of our Lord's Divinity

[1] I do not know of any scholar, however orthodox and conservative, who affirms that the discourses of Christ in the Fourth Gospel are verbatim reports, or denies that they are more or less coloured by the ideas of the Evangelist. Their whole tone and style is obviously so different from that of the Synoptic Gospels, that, if we accept the Synoptic discourses as substantially authentic (though not of course in every detail, for there are considerable discrepancies between them), it is impossible to regard the Johannine discourses as equally accurate reports : and even in this Gospel few sentences (when taken apart from the Preface, which does not pretend to represent the words of Jesus, and other comments of the Evangelist) imply actual " Godhead " in the sense of post-Nicene theology. " Is it not written in your law, I said [to the Judges of Israel], Ye are gods ? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came . . . say ye of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God ? " The claim to be the Son of God does not *necessarily* imply " Godhead." This requires to be still more remembered in the Synoptists. The Jews, however highly some of them may have exalted the

must be taken to express the Church's conception of what Jesus is or should be to His followers, and to the world, not His own theory about Himself.

(2) It obviously follows from this admission that Jesus was in the fullest sense a man, as much so as any other human being, that He had not merely a human body, but a human soul, intellect, will.[1] This was not always recognized by the Church. Many of the earlier Greek fathers—Irenaeus, for instance, and Athanasius—obviously thought of Him simply as the Logos of God residing in a human body. Later councils condemned this position in the person of Apollinarius :

Messiah, never thought of him as God or as equal with God. However close the union which the Christ of the Synoptists feels to exist between Himself and God, the distinction is always preserved. The claim that He would judge the world (if actually made) would not imply " Godhead." Cf. Acts xvii. 31 : " A day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by *the man* whom He hath ordained." It is clear that till the Confession at Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus had not claimed to be the Messiah or Son of God, and (if we accept all the words subsequently said to have been uttered by Him) He never claimed more than this. Even Luke x. 22, though it implies a very high conception of His own Divine Mission, does not imply " Godhead."

[1] " Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting " (*Athanasian Creed*). The last words are obviously explanatory of the term " man." The reasonable soul is the human soul.

from the point of view of later theology it cannot be too strongly asserted that Athanasius was an Apollinarian.[1] And I fear a great many people who now think themselves particularly orthodox are really Apollinarians too. I have known quite advanced "Catholics"—not by any means stupid or ignorant people—who simply did not know that the Church teaches that Christ had a human soul. When a Sunday-school teacher asks his class, "Who was Jesus Christ?" and tries to elicit the answer, "God," without the addition of the all-important "and man," he too is teaching Apollinarianism. Much so-called orthodoxy is really Apollinarianism; and some defenders of the Catholic faith, who are too well informed to become downright Apollinarians, are really under the influence of that heresy in the later reduced form of it which denied that Christ had a human

[1] In his earlier days. In the period when he wrote the *De Incarnatione* (before the Nicene Council) and almost as distinctly in the *Orations against the Arians*, there is no trace of any distinct recognition of a human soul in Jesus; the Logos seems simply to take the place of the human soul. In his later days (when the question began to be discussed) he did formally recognize the existence of a human soul, but it may be doubted how far this admission really affected his general way of thinking. See my book *The Idea of the Atonement*, pp. 299, 300, and two letters of mine in answer to Canon Lacey in *The Guardian* of November 4 and 18.

will. It is curious to note that that fiery *malleus hereticorum*, the Bishop of Zanzibar, quite definitely lapses into Monothelitism.

(3) It is equally unorthodox to suppose that the human soul of Jesus pre-existed. There is simply no basis for such a doctrine unless (with Origen) we say that all human souls exist before their birth into the world: but that is not the usually accepted Catholic position. St. Paul, indeed, believed in the pre-existence of the heavenly Messiah or Son of God—without distinguishing between the human and the Divine or semi-divine Christ—but from the time when the Logos Christology was accepted by the Church it has been held that what pre-existed was the Divine Logos, not the human Jesus.

(4) The Divinity of Christ does not *necessarily* imply the Virgin Birth or any other miracle. The Virgin Birth, if it could be historically proved, would be no demonstration of Christ's Divinity, nor would the disproof of it throw any doubt upon that doctrine. The Synoptic Gospels, which do not assert the Divinity of Christ, do in their present form narrate the Virgin Birth. The Fourth Gospel, which does assert the Divinity of the Logos, knows nothing of the Virgin Birth.

(5) The Divinity of Christ does not imply omniscience. Since the appearance of Bishop Gore's Bampton Lectures, it has been unnecessary

to labour that point, though the doctrine of a limitation of Christ's knowledge has not yet sunk into the popular mind. We still hear the conclusions of the higher criticism refuted by appeals to our Lord's acquiescence in the common Jewish views about the authorship or date of Old Testament books. I must add that Bishop Gore himself does not push his admissions to anything like the point which is imperatively demanded by an honest and critical study of the Gospel narratives. There is no more reason for supposing that Jesus of Nazareth knew more than His contemporaries about the true scientific explanation of the mental diseases which current belief attributed to diabolic possession, than that He knew more about the authorship of the Pentateuch or the Psalms.[1] And even if we reduce (as I personally am disposed to do) the genuine eschatological sayings to a minimum, it is difficult to deny that our Lord entertained some expectations about the future which history has not verified.[2]

[1] This does not imply (as is sometimes suggested) that in the spiritual region He "knew no more than an ordinary man." The idea of Christ as the supreme Revealer of God obviously implies the contrary.

[2] Personally I think it probable that all the more definite statements about a "coming again" and a supernatural Judgement in the immediate future are due to the ideas of the disciples rather than to Christ Himself, but it would be disastrous to make the Divinity of Christ

So much for the negative side. In what sense do these admissions allow of our still attributing Divinity to Jesus, and finding a permanent meaning in the formulæ of the Creeds and the Councils? Everything turns upon our conception of the true relation between God and man in general—and that is a vast problem which it is impossible here to discuss. I can only say this much. If "Divine" and "human" are thought of as mutually exclusive terms, if God is thought of as simply the Maker of man, if man is thought of as merely a machine or an animal having no community of nature with the Universal Spirit who is the cause or source or "ground" of the existence alike of Nature and of other spirits, then indeed it would be absurd to maintain that one human being, and one only, was both God and man at the same time. But such a view of the relation between God and man would not at the present day be accepted by any philosophy which finds any real place for God in its conception of the universe.

That man is not merely the creature and play-

depend upon a particular answer to this most difficult problem. We know that our Lord did not claim to know the date of the Judgement, but to contend that He never used any of the current Apocalyptic phrases suggestive of a date nearer than 1900 years would involve a somewhat drastic dealing with the documents.

thing of God, that there is a certain community of nature between God and man, that all human minds are reproductions "in limited modes" (to use the expression of my old master, T. H. Green) of the Divine Mind, that in all true human thinking there is a reproduction of the Divine thought, and above all that in the highest ideals which the human conscience recognizes there is a revelation of the ideal eternally present in the Divine Mind—these are the presuppositions under which alone any real meaning can be given to the doctrine. All modern philosophers who recognize that the knowledge of God is possible are agreed that we can only attain such knowledge by thinking of Him in the light of the human mind at its highest. And philosophical teachers have not been slow to identify this view with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, however severely they may criticize the form which the doctrine has received in the traditional theology. Professor Pringle-Pattison, for instance, in his *Idea of God* (a work of which I would speak with profound admiration), has written:

"We are far too apt to mechanize the great doctrine of the Incarnation, which forms the centre of the Christian faith. Whatever else it may mean, it means at least this—that in the conditions of the highest human life we have

access, as nowhere else, to the inmost nature of the Divine. 'God manifest in the flesh' is a more profound philosophical truth than the loftiest flight of speculation that outsoars all predicates and, for the greater glory of God, declares Him unknowable."[1]

He goes on to complain, as philosophers usually do, that this "Incarnation of the Son has been limited to a single individual."[2]

I quite agree with him that it is impossible to maintain that God is fully incarnate in Christ and not incarnate at all in anyone else. On the other hand, the philosophical critics of theology do not, as it appears to me, recognize how spiritually valueless—nay, how ethically pernicious—such a doctrine becomes when God is thought of as incarnating Himself equally in all human beings, the worst as well as the best. If we say "human nature is Divine," and stop there, we enter upon a line of thought which ends in the Hindoo theology or the very similar Absolutist philosophy which recognizes no cosmic significance in human morality, and places God "beyond good and evil." There is much in human nature which is not Divine at all. It is just because it so emphatically negatives such a non-moral doctrine of Divine immanence that the Christian doctrine

[1] *The Idea of God*, p. 157. [2] *Ib.*, p. 409.

of a supreme Incarnation in *one* historical Person becomes so valuable. Professor Pringle-Pattison himself (who is no Absolutist, though he is too fond of Absolutist phrases which, I venture to think, do not express his real belief) recognizes that it is " in the conditions of *the highest* human life that we have access as nowhere else to the inmost nature of the Divine." If we once recognize that it is especially in the moral consciousness at its highest, and in the lives which are most completely dominated by such a moral consciousness, that God is revealed, then it becomes possible to accept the doctrine that in a single human life God is revealed more completely than in any other. If we believe that every human soul reveals, reproduces, incarnates God *to some extent*; if we believe that in the great ethical teachers of mankind, the great religious personalities, the founders, the reformers of religions, the heroes, the prophets, the saints, God is more fully revealed than in other men; if we believe that up to the coming of Christ there had been a gradual, continuous, and on the whole progressive revelation of God (especially, though by no means exclusively, in the development of Jewish Monotheism), then it becomes possible to believe that in One Man the self-revelation of God has been signal, supreme, unique. That we are justified in thinking of God as like Christ, that the character

and teaching of Christ contains the fullest disclosure both of the character of God Himself and of His will for man—that is (so far as so momentous a truth can be summed up in a few words) the true meaning for us of the doctrine of Christ's Divinity.

Such at bottom is the permanent meaning of that doctrine of the Logos and the Holy Trinity in which this conviction clothed itself under the influence of Greek philosophical conceptions and terminology. The doctrine of the Logos grew up at a time when the Neo-platonic idea of the transcendence of God, His aloofness from the world, His inaccessibility to human thought or effort, had been pushed to a point which made it seem impossible that He should express Himself in created things or created minds without some sort of intermediary. The Reason or Thought or Word of God—the thought concept, be it remembered, rather than the spoken word—was conceived of as such an intermediary. God gave birth to the Logos and the Logos gave birth to the world. In the books of Proverbs and Wisdom the Logos, or rather the Wisdom of God (which is practically the same conception), is personified in a semi-poetic manner as the Assessor who stood at God's right hand in the creation of the universe. In the Alexandrian Jew Philo the idea becomes more metaphysical. Practically

everything that is said of the Word or the Son in the Fourth Gospel is said of the Logos in Philo, except his incarnation in the historic Jesus. In Philo the conception of the Logos has no connexion at all with the Messianic idea. That is the original thought of the Fourth Gospel—the master-stroke of its author's genius. But St. Paul, by attributing to Jesus all that the Apocalyptists had said about the heavenly Son of God or Messiah, had reached along another path much the same conception of the Messiah as the fourth Evangelist expressed by saying that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And the Johannine doctrine had great advantages over the Pauline. It was much less associated with Apocalyptic mythology. It made it possible to admit that the human Jesus had a beginning in time like other men, and to confine pre-existence to the Divine element in the historic Personality. Moreover, instead of presenting Christ as a semi-Divine being hovering between the Divine and the human, it enabled the theologian to say frankly that that in Jesus which was human was absolutely human, while that in Him which was Divine was absolutely Divine.

There remained, indeed, the problem of the relation between this "Word" which was God and yet incarnate in the human Jesus, and the Father-God, whose only begotten Son He was.

Was this Word personal or impersonal? If personal, how can we escape Polytheism? And if the Logos be identified with the One God, what becomes of the distinction between Father and Logos? I cannot here sketch the history of that long controversy out of which the orthodox Christology was eventually evolved, but I should like to note two or three points which are valuable for the modern reinterpretation of the doctrine.

(1) In the more philosophical Fathers such as Justin, and above all Origen, it was quite distinctly admitted that the Logos was not united to Jesus alone. He had dwelt in the Prophets. He had inspired Socrates and Plato. It was asserted only that the incarnation in Jesus was something supreme and unique.[1]

(2) Many of the earlier Fathers did not quite

[1] Here are two illustrations of Origen's Christology:

"We say that the Logos was united and made one with the soul of Jesus in a far higher degree than any other soul, seeing that He alone was able completely to receive the highest participation in the true Word and the true Wisdom and the true Righteousness" (*Contra Celsum*, v. 39; Lommatzsch, xix. 241).

"They see that from Him the Divine and the human nature began to be united (lit. woven together), so that human nature might become Divine by participation in the more Divine, not in Jesus alone, but also in all those who not only believe but also take up the life which Jesus taught" (*Contra Celsum*, iii. 28; Lommatzsch, xviii. 27).

definitely tend to think of the Logos as a distinct personality—a separate mind, will, centre of consciousness from the Father : the Son before the Incarnation was thought of as related to the Father very much as, for an intelligent pagan, Apollo was related to Zeus ; but the more distinct the personality the more definite also is the subordinate. When Athanasius made the Divine Son equal to the Father, co-eternal, " of the substance of the Father," he was distinctly an innovator, but an innovator who saved the Church from the Polytheism into which it was drifting. In making the distinction between the Father and the Logos a distinction within the nature of the one Divine Being, he prepared the way for a more philosophical and genuinely monotheistic interpretation of the Logos doctrine and of that doctrine of the Trinity which had grown out of it.

(3) In St. Augustine, and still more distinctly in St. Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen generally, it becomes evident that nothing is left of that older conception of Christ as a distinct, a " second " and inferior God which is found in Justin and the earlier Fathers. The Logos now becomes not a separate mind, but a distinguishable activity of the one and only Divine Mind. The Son is the Wisdom of God, as the Father is His Power and the Holy Ghost His Love, and the

three constitute " One Mind." It is difficult to say what Tertullian originally meant when he first introduced the fatal term " Persons " as the name for these distinctions within the Divine Mind, but it is evident the term " Person " is now (in Augustine and St. Thomas) used in a very technical sense and a sense quite different from that in which it is used either in popular speech or in the language of modern philosophy. It cannot be too emphatically asserted that, when traditionalists like Canon Mason, and even philosophical and rational theologians like Canon Peter Green, speak of the three " Persons " of the Trinity as three minds or centres of consciousness and frankly deny that God is One Mind, it is they and not those whom they criticize who are heretics from the standpoint of Augustinian and scholastic orthodoxy. To St. Thomas, as to the ordinary modern philosopher, their position would have been Tritheism, pure and simple.

There is undoubtedly much in the fully developed scholastic doctrine, and still more in the earlier theology out of which it grew, which is of no intrinsic value at the present day. All of it requires translation into the language of modern thought, and some of it, it must be frankly confessed, almost defies such translation. The conception of the Logos taken by itself, apart from its Christian application, is one for which modern

philosophy has no use. But that does not prevent our seeing in the fully developed doctrine of the Person of Christ the expression in the language of a bygone philosophy of that which still is—and, I believe, always will be—the central truth of Christianity, viz. that in the life and character, the teaching and the Personality of Jesus Christ the world has received its highest revelation of God, a revelation, however, which is still being continued and further developed by the work of God's Spirit in other human minds, and particularly in the society of Christ's followers.

That is, at bottom, I believe, what we mean when we speak of the Divinity of Christ. To justify the central position which it ascribes to Jesus in the religious history of the world would require an elaborate examination of the teaching and life of Jesus, and the comparison of His religion with other religions and other systems of religious and moral teaching. And yet after all the truth of such a conception could not be in the ordinary sense " proved." The truth of a moral ideal is a matter of immediate judgement. The doctrine of a supreme revelation of God in Christ must ultimately rest upon the affirmation of the moral consciousness that in its essential principles that moral ideal which is most fully incarnated in Christ's teaching and His life is still the truest and the highest that we know.

# I

## THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

I THINK you will probably be expecting me to say something about certain statements which have appeared in the Press concerning me. A few weeks ago I took part in a conference of a society called "The Churchmen's Union for the Advancement of Progressive Religious Thought." The subject of the conference was "The Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The plan I followed in my paper was first of all to enumerate certain things which the Divinity of Christ has sometimes been supposed to mean, but which that doctrine does not necessarily involve—certain beliefs the difficulty of which has often kept people back from a whole-hearted acceptance of that doctrine; and then I tried to put what I believed to be

[1] Preached in Carlisle Cathedral, Sept. 11, 1921.

the essence of the doctrine into simple and untechnical modern language. A large number of newspapers published to the world all the things that I said the doctrine did not mean and left out all that I said about what it does mean. The doctrine of the Church is that Christ is God and Man. These papers printed all that I said about the humanity of our Lord, and left out all that I said about the Divinity. This was a most unfair and dishonest procedure. The natural result was, I am afraid, that thousands of people drew the inference that I had denied the Divinity of Christ. And some of the papers went further. They prefixed to the notice flaming headlines distinctly stating that I had denied the Divinity of Christ. Others even put words into my mouth which I never uttered, and reported me as saying that Christ was "man and not God."

Those last three words, I need hardly say, I never uttered. The statement must have been deliberately and maliciously invented. Exactly the same trick—the

insertion of those very words—has been played upon me before, possibly by the same pressman. It was not a *bona-fide* mistake. The lie was contradicted and apologized for in the paper which was the first and chief offender, and in all others which reported it so far as I could reach them.

But some people who should know better appear to go on believing the falsehood and repeating it. Those of you who have been frequent attendants at this Cathedral on Sunday evenings know very well that I have constantly preached that doctrine in this pulpit to the best of my ability. I am sure, my friends, that I shall have your sympathy in the cruel and unjust persecution to which I have been subjected. And I ask you to do what you can to contradict and dissipate a rumour which has arisen out of an ignorant and malicious newspaper libel.

I propose this evening to try to show you very briefly that none of the assertions which I made was in the least inconsistent

with the doctrine of the Church upon the subject. In future sermons I shall hope to explain and justify some of them more fully.

Of the five statements which were published broadcast over the country under such headings as "amazing" or "startling" or the like, two are pieces of orthodox doctrine which are not only allowed but absolutely required by the teaching of the Church. The first of these is the statement that Jesus Christ was really man—that He was a perfectly human being, with a human soul, intellect, will. Some of the newspaper correspondents or letter-writers, including some clergymen, are, it appears, so ignorant of the faith for which they affect so much zeal as to suppose that the Church teaches that Christ is God and not man, or that the body of Jesus was human but not His soul. The Athanasian Creed declares that Christ is "perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting"—not a human body only, but a human soul, intellect,

will. A human being without a soul would not be perfect man. To deny that Christ had a human soul is the heresy known as Apollinarianism. That is the heresy which I contradicted, and those who find fault with what I said on this head are really Apollinarians and not orthodox Christians.

Another of my statements which the newspapers have described as "amazing" was that this human soul of Jesus did not exist before His birth in time. That is also part of the traditional doctrine of the Church. The Church teaches that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son or Word of God, existed from all eternity; but the human soul to which that Word of God was united at His birth did not exist before that birth. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"—"was *made* flesh." He was not flesh before the Incarnation. Flesh here stands obviously for the whole of His human nature, the human soul as well as the human body. This, too, is part of the ordinary teaching of the Church.

My other three statements represent opinions more or less widely held by theologians both in ancient and in modern times. They are quite consistent with the teaching of the Church, if not actually required by it. I said that the Divinity of Christ does not necessarily imply the omniscience of Christ's human soul. The question whether the human soul of Christ was omniscient is a matter which has been discussed in the Church from very early times. It seems to be distinctly implied in St. Luke's words: "Jesus increased in wisdom." If He possessed all wisdom from the moment of the Incarnation, clearly He could not have increased in wisdom. Moreover, He distinctly told His disciples that He did not know the date of the coming judgement. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father." Some of the early Fathers take our Lord at His word and admit that His knowledge was limited. Others explain the words away and practically say that He did know, but did not choose to

tell. To save His omniscience they deny His veracity. I leave you to judge which opinion is the more reasonable and the more reverent.

The question has become of great importance at the present day. For modern research has revealed that Jesus shared some of the ideas of His countrymen about matters of science and history which the progress of knowledge shows to be mistaken. He assumes the ordinary Jewish views about the authorship and date of Old Testament books—views which modern scholars find it impossible to accept. It was just the necessity of showing that such a limitation of knowledge was quite consistent with a real belief in Christ's Divine nature which led that very zealous champion of orthodoxy Bishop Gore some thirty years ago to revive the doctrine of a limitation in Christ's human knowledge, which, though never condemned by the Church, had practically dropped very much out of sight. Bishop Gore's teaching in *Lux Mundi* and in his later Bampton

Lectures caused great excitement. He, like myself now, was freely accused of not believing in the Divinity of Christ. Like myself, he was called upon, if he was an honest man, to resign his clerical position. It is true that I should be disposed to apply the principle further than he did—to the question of diabolical possession, for instance. But that can make no difference in principle. Bishop Gore has denied the omniscience of Christ's human intellect quite as much as I have done; and I doubt whether there are now half a dozen bishops on the bench who do not in this matter agree with him and with me.

The moment you think of it you must see that a limitation of knowledge was necessary to any real incarnation, any real manifestation of God's nature and character in a human mind and a human life. A mind which knew all the facts of history, all the science that is now known to all the men of science put together, all the science that is as yet undiscovered, and

knew it all when He was an infant in arms, would not be a human mind at all. Such a mind would be God and not man, and the Church's teaching is that He is God and man. Nobody has any interest in discrediting this assertion except those who wish to represent the whole doctrine of the Incarnation as something altogether incredible and absurd.

Then I have said that the Divinity of Christ does not necessarily imply the Virgin Birth or any other miracle. Does not *necessarily* imply. You will observe that I have said nothing against the belief in the Virgin Birth. And I am not going to say anything against it now. But you must most of you know that many people do feel a great difficulty about that question. It is a question which must be decided by historical evidence, and the most Christian-minded scholars are divided about the sufficiency of the evidence.

Are we to say to all who feel doubts about this difficult question of historical evidence that they are precluded from

believing in the Divinity of Christ? Are we to say to learned men who have studied the matter and ended by feeling more or less doubt about it, or to unlearned people who see the difficulties of it and have no time for elaborate study, "Unless you can believe, without a shadow of doubt, the historical character of this event about which you know that Christian scholars are much divided, you cannot believe in what is rightly considered the central truth of Christianity"?

Surely we ought not to say that if we can help it; and a very little thought will show that there is no necessary connexion between the two doctrines. If the author of the Fourth Gospel could believe in the Divinity of Christ, though he either did not know of this belief or attached so little importance to it that he does not mention it, so can others. I do not think any competent theologian, however strongly he may be personally attached to the belief in the miraculous birth, will say that we cannot believe in the Divinity of Christ—

fully, completely, in the sense of the ancient formularies—without it. The two beliefs are quite independent of each other. According to the Church's doctrine the Son of God did not become Son at the moment of the Incarnation. He was Son of God from all eternity.

And then, lastly, I maintained that our Lord did not Himself claim Divinity. This is the only one of my assertions which there is any excuse for treating as at all novel or startling. But if it is thought so, it is simply because to see its truth you must know a little about the results of recent Biblical study.

In the first three Gospels it is almost a truism to say that our Lord does not claim Divinity. Probably our Lord did in the end—though not till after that memorable confession of St. Peter at Cæsarea Philippi—call Himself, almost certainly he allowed Himself to be called by others, the Son of God; but to Jewish ears this did not imply Godhead. The Son of God meant simply the promised Messiah,

and, various as were the current ideas about the Messiah, no Jew thought of the Messiah as actually God or as equal with God. The Messiah was thought of as a very exalted and supernatural being, never as God Himself. It is upon the Fourth Gospel that the idea that our Lord expressly claimed to be something much more than the Messiah is chiefly based. And those who think to establish this belief by quoting a string of texts from the Fourth Gospel do not know that by the admission of practically all modern scholars the sayings attributed to our Lord in this Gospel cannot be regarded as literal, verbatim reports of our Lord's actual words. Of course, even the sayings in the first three Gospels cannot be treated as if they were based upon a shorthand writer's reports. But, speaking broadly, they do present us with a truthful historical picture of our Lord's teaching. So much is admitted by sober modern critics.

But when we turn to the Fourth Gospel

we must all have been struck by the enormous difference in the style and tone of the discourses. The style is obviously the style of the Evangelist; for it is the same style when he records our Lord's words and when he is speaking on his own account. And it is not only the style that is different. The long argumentative discourses against the Pharisees are very unlike the Sermon on the Mount, or the parables, or the short, pithy, homely, practical teachings of the other Gospels. It is admitted by practically all scholars, however orthodox and conservative they may be, that the discourses of the Fourth Gospel have been more or less coloured by the ideas, the reflections, the interpretations of the Evangelist. It is extremely difficult to say how much of the teaching in the Fourth Gospel represents what our Lord actually taught about Himself and how much is the teaching of the Evangelist—teaching none the less true and spiritually valuable because it may not represent the Saviour's actual words. It may be doubted whether,

taken as they stand, many of the sayings usually quoted really do amount to a claim to Divinity when read apart from the Evangelist's preface and the Evangelist's comments, and without the language of the Athanasian Creed in our minds.

Whether our Lord made statements about Himself from which we might legitimately infer His actual Divinity is not now in question. All I said was He did not claim Divinity. He did not say or imply "I am God"; and in making this assertion I believe that there are few modern scholars or serious students of the Gospel who would not agree with me. There is nothing in the denial that our Lord claimed to be God which is in any way opposed to the teaching of the Church. The Creeds do not say that our Lord claimed to be God.

But because our Lord did not Himself claim Divinity that is no reason why we should not attribute Divinity to Him. The Church has called Christ God—God

as well as man. And I believe the Church has been right in so calling Him. The doctrine of Christ's Divinity is, as a matter of history, due to the conviction of Christ's followers that in Him there had been made a self-revelation of God which was full, final, capable of saving the world. I believe we shall get a much higher, truer, and more satisfying conception of Christ's Divinity when we rest it mainly upon the testimony of conscience, of Christian experience in the individual and in the Church at large, upon the inward light that lighteth every man, than when we make it depend upon some express claim of Christ or some doubtful deduction from His words.

Army chaplains and ex-chaplains have been telling us, as the result of the unusual insight into the average lay mind which they have enjoyed during the late years of war, that the doctrine of Christ's Divinity as too frequently preached does not come home to men's minds. Christ Himself does appeal to most men. They can recognize

the perfection of His character; they feel His enormous attractiveness; they can see in Him the great example—the leader, the prophet, and more than the prophet. But much that is told them about Him simply puzzles them, and fails to help them. They feel that a being who was conscious at every moment of His life that He was the ruler of the universe, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, could not be in any real sense human. His struggles and temptations could not have been at all like those which they have to face. His victory over temptation, they feel, could not help them; His attitude towards God the Father, His faith in God, His relations towards His fellows could not possibly be theirs. And they are surely right in so feeling. Of such a being it could not be said with any real meaning that He could be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; "He hath been at all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"; that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"; that "He can bear

gently with the ignorant and erring, for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity."

Now all this does not show that the doctrine of Christ's Divinity which was gradually elaborated in the mind of the Church is not true. But it does show, I think, that there is something wrong in the common ways of teaching it. We want to teach more definitely than we do the real humanity of Christ. We must begin by making men feel the attractiveness of His character, the beauty of His life as a real man living among men, the depth of His spiritual insight and communion with the Father, the truth of all that He taught about the nature of God and the proper attitude of man towards God and towards His fellows. Then we can go on to say, "We can form no higher conception of God than we see exhibited in humanity at its highest; and in Christ, as in no other man before or since, we may see what humanity at its highest is; and therefore

in Him we believe that God has made a full and sufficient revelation of Himself. His character is the character of God. In Him God is once for all revealed. Think of God as you think of Him, and you will know about God all that man can know about God. Love God as you cannot but love Him, and you will be loving the God who is manifest in Him. Christ could not be all this if God were not in Him in a wholly unique and exceptional sense. In Christ we see God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh, God revealed under the limitations of humanity."

When Christ is presented to men in this light, it becomes the natural impulse of every human heart that has felt in any way His solitary attractiveness, all that He has been to the world, all that He has been and yet may be to each individual soul, to fall down before Him and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

I know, when any attempt is made to express the Divinity of Christ in any but

the technical terms actually used by the Church, it is the tendency of the theologian, and even of not very theological persons strongly attached to the traditional formulæ, to say "that is not enough, the Divinity of Christ means something more than that." *What more* they will never tell us.

I do not say that the Divinity of Christ does not mean more than I have said. I could not put all that I myself think about it into a twenty-five minutes' paper at Cambridge or into a single Sunday-evening sermon. I do not profess to be able to unravel all the mysteries that are involved in the relation of Christ to the Father, in the union of the Divine and the human which the Church asserts, and which the ordinary Christian conscience feels to exist in Christ as in no other. But surely the elaborate formulæ of the Creeds and the Councils can do us no good unless we can in some measure understand them. I have tried—not only in that little paper at Cambridge, but in all my teaching during

the last thirty-seven years of my clerical life—to help people to see some intelligible meaning in these formulæ which so many repeat without meaning anything definite by them, and which so many cast away as worthless because they cannot find a meaning for them. By all means let others who are dissatisfied with such attempts help us to see what further value there is in the old formulæ; but that is no reason why they should reject as worthless the humblest attempt at finding in them a truth that modern men may appreciate, and live by.

After all, what do we really want in a supreme revelation of God, a supreme incarnation or manifestation of God in a human life? Surely we want two things. We want to know what God is like, and we want to know what sort of men and women God wants us to be. And such a revelation, as I believe, has been made to us in Jesus Christ. When we appreciate and understand the character of Christ, we do know what God is like; we see God

in Him; we can see, as we cannot see so richly and fully in any other life, that God is love. And when we look at Christ and listen to His teaching, we can say "that is what God wills that you should be"; and the greatest help that you can have towards being what He wants you to be is to contemplate that life, to pray to, to hold communion with, that Christ and the God who is revealing Himself to us in Him, to obey His teaching, and to follow in His steps.

For One towards whom we naturally feel in this way the language of the old Creeds and Councils is not too strong. Doubtless there are technical terms borrowed from the language of Greek metaphysics in these definitions which are more of a difficulty than a help to modern men. But at bottom they are all attempts to express the supremacy, the adequacy, the uniqueness, the saving power of the great self-revelation which God has once for all made of Himself in Christ. That at bottom is what we mean, that at least is the most

essential part of what we mean, when we speak of Christ as "of one substance with the Father, God of [or *from*] God, Light from Light, very God from very God."

## II

# THE WORD OF GOD[1]

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—JOHN i. 1.

LAST Sunday I tried to show you that the doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is quite compatible with certain views about the actual facts of our Lord's life and personality which are coming to be very generally accepted among scholars. The teaching of the Church and the teaching of scientific history are perfectly compatible on one condition. That condition is that we assert strongly and unreservedly the Church's own teaching about our Lord's humanity—that we really believe Him to be "perfect man" as well as "perfect God." I showed you that the Church does not teach that the human soul of Jesus Christ existed before His birth into this world. It was the Word of God which

[1] Preached in Carlisle Cathedral, Sept. 18, 1921.

existed from all eternity—not that human soul to which the Word was, in a unique and extraordinary manner, united at the Incarnation. "The Word was in the beginning with God"; at a definite moment of history "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Then, and not before, the Word became man.

Now there is an aspect of this question which I had not time to touch upon last Sunday, and that is the question, "What sort of pre-existence had this Word of God who is elsewhere called the Son of God, though in the Fourth Gospel itself He is not called Son before the Incarnation?" How far and in what sense was the Word a separate being from God the Father? In what sense did the Word pre-exist? Now this question can only be answered by going a little into the history of this term—the Word of God.

The author of the Fourth Gospel did not invent this term "Logos," which in Greek means equally Reason or Thought, and Word. He found it already in existence.

It was a stock term of the philosophy of the time—used in somewhat different senses by different philosophies. As I pointed out last Sunday, when our Lord called Himself or allowed Himself to be called Son of God, what He meant was primarily "the Messiah."

St. Paul thinks of Christ primarily as the Messiah—a term which would be quite understood by Jews and by Gentile proselytes or half-proselytes to Judaism familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and with current Jewish ideas. St. Paul, particularly in his later Epistles, has a very exalted conception of the Messiah: He represents Him in the language of the Jewish writers of apocalypses or books of revelation as almost a Divine Being, though he does not actually identify Him with God. And it was part of this conception of the Messiah that in some sense He existed before His appearance or manifestation on earth. But to pure Greeks brought up as pagans, not much acquainted with Jewish thought and literature, the

term Messiah would signify little or nothing. The term "Son of God" was at least in need of explanation. In order to represent to Greek minds—especially to Greek minds with a little smattering of philosophy—what Jewish Christians meant by calling our Lord the Messiah, the Evangelist borrows the mysterious term "Logos." He wants some term to express the notion of a supreme Revealer or Manifestation of God. And this is just what the term "Word" meant to the Greeks. The term had already been borrowed by Jewish writers, who were trying to teach Gentiles the Jewish faith in the one true and only God, to express Jewish religion in terms of Greek philosophy.

In the book of Proverbs we find the Wisdom of God (which practically means much the same thing as the Word) represented in a half-poetical manner as the assessor or helper or intermediary of God in the creation of the world. Wisdom is represented in the book of Proverbs as saying, "The Lord possessed me in the

beginning of His way, before His works of old. . . . When there were no depths, I was brought forth. . . . When He marked out the foundation of the earth, then was I by Him, as a master workman" (Prov. viii. 22–33), and so on.

This conception was still further developed by the Alexandrian Jew Philo, who was a younger contemporary of St. Paul. Almost everything that St. John and other early Christian writers say about the Logos is to be found in Philo. For Philo the Logos is the Son of God, the only begotten Son, the first-born Son, the Image of God, the Mediator, the great High Priest, the heavenly Man, the second God; almost everything except that which to the Christian writer is the really vital thing about Him—that the Word "took flesh and dwelt among us."

The Greeks had thought of God as revealing Himself in nature and in the mind of man. St. John recognizes the partial truth of this idea. Nature is to a certain extent a revelation of God; it was through the

Word that God made the world : still more has God revealed something of His nature in the mind and conscience of every man, and especially in the great prophets and teachers of that nation to whom God had made so much fuller a disclosure of His Will than He had to any other people. "There was the true light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not." But now in the person of Jesus God had revealed Himself fully and completely as never before. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This conception of the Logos is to us a very difficult conception. In Philo it is almost impossible to discover how far this Word of God is thought of as a distinct being from God Himself, a personal mind or will, or how far as a sort of impersonal principle : how far the Word means merely a thought or idea in the Divine mind, or

again God Himself conceived of as revealing Himself in nature and the mind of man, as distinguished from God conceived of as that "veiled Being" (to use the language which Mr. Wells has made popular) from whom this self-revelation sprang. And the difficulty is not altogether removed in the Fourth Gospel.

What sort of being was this "Word"? What sort of separateness had this Word who was with God from the Father-God before He made the great and full revelation of Himself in Jesus? (You must remember that the question is not settled by pointing out that the Evangelist speaks of the Word as "He" or "Him," not as "it"; for the Greek word Logos is masculine—whether used personally or impersonally.) And so far as the Word was a distinct being from God, did He exist side by side with God from all eternity, or was He created at a definite time—"before the worlds" indeed, but still at a definite moment of time?

The matter is not quite so clear as we are

naturally inclined to suppose. The Jews were accustomed to think of anything very precious or valuable as having existed in some sense before its manifestation in time. But that did not necessarily imply such a distinct and personal existence as modern minds are naturally inclined to suppose their language to mean. The Ark, for instance, was thought of as pre-existing in the mind of God before it was actually made—that is to say, the design or pattern of it always existed in the mind of God. The Messiah pre-existed, but it is not quite clear whether here too what was meant was that God always had the purpose of sending a Messiah and of the sort of Messiah He would send, or whether the Messiah was supposed to have personal existence before his appearance on the stage of history. And so Christian writers spoke of the Church as having existed from all eternity in the mind of God.

The Evangelist probably did think of the Divine Word as having a somewhat more distinct and substantial existence

than this ; but exactly what sort of existence He attributed to Him and what sort of distinctness from God the Father he conceived of the Word as possessing before His incarnation in Jesus is not clearly and distinctly expressed. If it had been more clearly expressed, there would probably not have been so many controversies on the subject as there actually were. It was only after centuries of debate that the demand for a definite doctrine on the subject came to be satisfied by the Church. Many of the Fathers who were considered in their day and are still considered most orthodox held opinions on this subject which were subsequently condemned as heresies, and what are now the orthodox notions were often, when they were first introduced, considered heresies.

And we must not assume, as is often done, that if we can only get back to the earliest doctrine of the Church, we shall necessarily be getting at the truest and highest doctrine. On the contrary, if we have any belief in that doctrine of the

Holy Spirit guiding the Church unto all the truth, we should rather expect that very often the later doctrine will be the truer.

I imagine that to a great many people at the present day the real difficulty of the Church's doctrine of Christ's Divinity lies not in what the Church teaches as to the supreme manifestation of God in the historical personality of Christ as in what it teaches, or is supposed to teach, about the pre-existence of the Divine Son before His incarnation. And on that subject the teaching of the Church has varied enormously. That is a question about which the Church disputed for centuries.

In many of the early Fathers there can be no doubt that the Son was thought of as a quite distinct mind or consciousness from the Father. These men, you must remember, were not Jews by birth, but Greek-speaking Gentiles, converted pagans; and they were not afraid of language which would have unspeakably shocked the Jews and which the later Church would have

condemned as sheer polytheism—the belief in more gods than one.

And so long as the matter was thus thought of the Son was always treated as very inferior to the Father. Justin Martyr, for instance, in the middle of the second century frankly speaks of Christ as "the second God." The Father was the supreme God, the Son was an inferior God, just as to the pagan Zeus was the supreme god, and Apollo and Ares and so on were inferior gods. But gradually it came to be seen that Christianity could not accept the notion of many gods. Either the Word must be thought as in some sense one with God the Father, or else He could not properly be regarded as God. That is the real meaning of the great struggle between Athanasius and Arius as to the equality between the Father and the Son.

You know that after a long struggle Athanasius won. At the Council of Nicæa in the year 325 it was decided that the Son must be looked upon as fully and completely God—not as a sort of semi-divine

Being hovering between Godhood and manhood, and that it was this God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. But the more strongly it was asserted that the Son was equal to the Father, the more completely all the attributes of the supreme God were applied to Him, the more it became evident that, if the Christian Church was to retain its belief in one only true God, it must in some way be made plain that the distinction between Father and Son or Word was not a distinction between two separate Divine Minds, but a distinction which somehow existed within the being of the one God. That was the great step which Athanasius took. When Athanasius and the Council of Nicæa pronounced that the Son was of one substance with the Father, he saved the Church from the polytheism into which it was rapidly drifting. That phrase "of one substance" is a somewhat difficult and mysterious term to us; but it meant at all events this —that there is but one God, not a superior God and an inferior God outside Him.

What then becomes of the distinction between the "Persons" of the Godhead as they came to be called in the West—between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? It is extremely difficult in Athanasius and others who accepted the doctrine embodied in the Nicene Creed to discover what sort of separateness they attributed to the Son before His incarnation in Jesus. Sometimes they use language which suggests a relation between two separate minds or persons in the modern sense; at other times the Father and the Word seems rather to be a distinction between separate attributes or aspects or activities of the one and same God. But when we come to later times, at least in the West, there can be no doubt about the matter at all.

From the time of St. Augustine orthodox theology did not think of this distinction as implying that the Son or Word before His incarnation in Jesus was a distinct mind or will side by side with the Mind or Will of the Father—as distinct from Him as one human being is from another, and

capable of entering into conversations or dialogues with the Father. Many English people derive their notions on these subjects from the poet Milton, who, you must remember, was not an orthodox Christian at all, but an avowed Arian. When we turn to the great treatise on the Holy Trinity by St. Augustine, you will find that the relation between the Father, Son, and Spirit is never compared to the relation between three human beings or three distinct individuals of the same species, but always to the relation between different activities or manifestations of one and the same human mind. He compares the relation between the Persons to the relation between Memory, Wisdom, and Will or Love (for the Will of God is always a loving will) in one and the same human mind. How little he uses the word "Persons" when applied to the Holy Trinity in the modern sense is clear when he tells us that the love of the Father for the Son *is* the Holy Ghost; the love of one person for another is not a person in anything like the

modern sense of the term, a distinct consciousness, intellect, will. St. Augustine tells us distinctly that God is One Mind—one Mind, not three minds; and the Athanasian Creed is simply an abridgement of St. Augustine's great book on the Trinity.

This view of the Holy Trinity is put still more plainly by the great mediæval schoolman St. Thomas Aquinas, whose *Sum of Theology* is still the basis of theological instruction in every Roman Catholic seminary. He and other schoolmen explain the distinction between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity as the distinction between Power or First Cause, Wisdom, and Will or Love in one and the same Divine Mind. And here we have a doctrine of the Trinity which is perfectly clear, intelligible, and rational. And it also happens to be absolutely orthodox. You cannot be more orthodox than St. Thomas Aquinas. It was he more than anyone else who determined what should be considered orthodox in the Western Church; the men

who drew up our articles of religion, for instance, would never have dreamed of questioning his orthodoxy on such a point as this; this was common ground to all parties and Churches—Roman, Anglican, Continental Protestant.

Do you say, "Many, or perhaps most, Unitarians believe this"—that God is Power and Wisdom and Love? If they do, that will not alter the orthodoxy of the doctrine. Perhaps, if the doctrine of the Holy Trinity had always been preached in this simple and rational manner, there would be fewer Unitarians in the world. Unfortunately such simple and rational explanations have usually been confined to the study and the seminary; and the doctrine preached in the pulpit and the Sunday school has been too often something which St. Augustine or St. Thomas would have described as sheer Tritheism—a belief in three Divine Beings existing from all eternity side by side with one another, though in very close agreement and co-operation. It cannot be too distinctly

stated that such doctrine is not really orthodox. At least since the time of Augustine it is asserted that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are One God, One Mind, One self-conscious Being.

But in practice the difference between the modern Unitarian and the modern orthodox Christian turns not so much upon their views as to the relation between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity as to the question of the Incarnation. Unitarians are not usually willing to think of God as in any exceptional and unique sense revealing or manifesting Himself in Christ; or at all events they will not apply to Him the language in which the Church has endeavoured to express its sense of the fullness and unique supremacy of the revelation which God has made of Himself in Christ —language which, though some of it is the language of a bygone age, may still, when properly understood, be quite reasonably and justifiably applied to Christ. If we believe (with St. Paul) that "God was in Christ" in some supreme and unique way,

we may quite reasonably and intelligibly speak of Him as Divine and human, the Word of God made flesh, of one substance with the Father, God from—derived from —God, God revealed under the limitations of humanity. If there are any people calling themselves Unitarians who feel they could with sincerity use such language of Christ, then of course they are not really Unitarians.

I believe that the Church's language about the pre-existence of the Son or Word is capable of a quite reasonable explanation and justification. But after all I do not think most lay Churchmen trouble themselves very much about the speculative question about the relation between the Persons of the Holy Trinity before the Incarnation. They value the doctrine of the Holy Trinity chiefly because it is an assertion of the fullness and supremacy and finality of the revelation once made to the world in the life and character, the teaching and the personality, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have only touched upon this question of the Holy Trinity because I think the doctrine as commonly taught has often kept people back from believing in the Divinity of Christ. I have tried to show that the real doctrine of the Church offers no such difficulty. Because we do not think that the Word or Reason of God was before the birth of Jesus a separate mind or consciousness from that of God the Father, because with St. Thomas we think that the distinction of Persons was a distinction within the one Mind of God, that is no reason why we should not see in Christ the supreme revelation of that Reason or Wisdom of God which is God Himself, or why we should not accept with fullest conviction and confidence as he did the great declaration: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The real value of these doctrines lies not in the satisfaction of speculative curiosity as to the metaphysical nature of God, but

in leading us up to a true conception of God's character and of His purposes for us. The doctrines formulated by Creeds and Councils, Fathers and Schoolmen, are undeniably difficult and complicated. Most of the people who dogmatize so glibly about them, and who are so ready to pronounce other people heretics for not interpreting them in the same way as themselves, are not aware of their difficulty. Few of them could state their own belief without falling into some heresy or other which the Church has condemned.

Of course in this short sermon I have been obliged to ignore most of these difficulties and complications and to tell you only the essence of the Church's teaching in the simplest language. Even so I am afraid that some of you may be wearied and perplexed. I have tried to show you that the Church's doctrine is quite reasonable and intelligible. But I hasten to add that it is not necessary for the salvation of any individual soul to have very distinct notions on such subjects. St. Paul's simple

Creed, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," is surely almost as much as we want in a creed to live by. The later doctrines represent merely an expansion of this fundamental truth and an attempt to avoid various erroneous ways of understanding it. Let me assure you I do not intend to go on preaching about such difficult and controversial questions in these Sunday-evening services; but as these questions have, quite against my wishes, become subjects of popular controversy in the newspapers and in common talk, I have felt it a duty to try to do what I can to clear up the difficulties which I may have suggested in some minds.

Before I conclude I will attempt to put the whole matter in a still simpler way. What the doctrine of the Word, and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is based upon it, should most of all teach us is simply this: That God is revealed in Christ; that the character of Christ is the character of God; that we may think of God as like Christ; that the character of Christ, so far

as it can be summed up in a word, is Love; and that God goes on revealing Himself to human souls, especially in that society of Christ's followers which we call the Church. The vital essence of these doctrines is contained in the simple words: "Herein was the love of God manifested towards us, because that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." And that manifestation has taught us, as nothing else could, that "God is love," and that "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him."

## III

# THE GREATEST NEED OF THE CHURCH[1]

"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."—2 PETER i. 5.

IT is being very generally said that the Church is losing, or at least is in great danger of losing, its hold upon the nation. The most enthusiastic friends of the Church seem as eager to proclaim that fact as its most contemptuous foes. Among the friends the only difference lies in their diagnosis of the disease and in the remedies which they would prescribe. I am not at all disposed to swell the chorus of criticism. Many of the complaints against the Church, both those which come from friends and those which come from foes, are, I venture to think, exaggerated and overdone.

And in particular there has been far too

[1] Preached in Solihull Church, Oct. 9, 1921.

much abuse of the clergy. In all ages the Church and the clergy have more or less fallen below their magnificent ideals. That is inevitable. But after all it may, I believe, fairly be said that the standard of devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of the parochial clergy (as one who has never borne the burdens of the parochial clergyman, I may be allowed to say it) has never been higher—at least since the days of persecution.

But there is one respect in which the criticism has hardly been overdone. The Church has not been bold enough in meeting the intellectual difficulties of the age; and that failure has more to do with other kinds of inefficiency than is sometimes supposed. It is possible to exaggerate the Church's lack of influence in other directions: all that we heard during the War about the unconscious Christianity of the average soldier is so much testimony to the direct or indirect effects of the Church's work. The unconscious Christianity of the many must be the outcome of conscious

or half-conscious Christianity in the comparatively few.

But that the Church has not the hold that we should like it to have over the intellectual life of the age is a proposition which few will dispute. The ideas about the universe which find expression not merely in the works of philosophers and professed scholars, but in those of popular novelists and men of letters and cultivated journalists, are rarely the same as those which we most often hear assumed in the pulpit, the Diocesan Conference, and the religious newspaper. It is just the most religious people who are most eager to proclaim, and even to exaggerate, this discord. Do they not almost expect a man of science to be an agnostic, and a lay man of learning to be at all events not a very orthodox Christian? Is it not almost enough to discredit a man's opinion in many religious circles to call him a Professor—even though he may chance to be also in Holy Orders?

And it would be a great mistake to sup-

pose that this failure to hold the mind of the age is to be observed only among more or less academic people. Our army chaplains and ex-chaplains know better. Here are the words of Mr. Studdert-Kennedy, better known to the soldier as "Woodbine Willy": "It is awful to realize that when one stands up to preach Christ the soldier feels that you are defending a whole ruck of obsolete theories and antiquated muddles." And this discord between average Church teaching and average lay opinion is not confined to those who have absolutely turned their back upon the Churches and their ordinances. A very large proportion of those who still come to church do not expect to have their doubts and difficulties met in the Church's official teaching. They go to church to satisfy their devotional needs, and to get practical help for right living, but for intellectual guidance they look elsewhere.

Now I am by no means assuming that, when there is this collision between the ideas of the official Church on the one

hand and the more intellectual, the more educated, or more thoughtful laity on the other, the truth must lie wholly with those who are most alienated from the Church's point of view. Far from it. At a time when knowledge is advancing by enormous strides, when specialism is carried so far that the students of any one branch of knowledge have little time to acquaint themselves with any other, it is quite natural that there should be much one-sided intellectual development ; that those whose studies are concerned with matter should often be blind to the spiritual side of our nature and its needs ; that, when in so many directions old beliefs are breaking down, the truths which were enshrined in or associated with those beliefs should be overlooked.

The ideas on such subjects of the "man in the street," or even of the man of science or the man of letters with no special interest in theology or philosophy, are often as crude and ill-informed as those of the uninstructed religious person. The mere existence of doubt or anti-religious opinion

is not necessarily to the Church's discredit. But surely the existence of this discord should be a matter of grave concern to the Churches and to every individual Christian, and all efforts to put an end to it welcomed and encouraged, whatever mistakes may be made, whether in the direction of excessive conservatism or of excessive liberalism.

Can it seriously be said that the Church is doing its duty in this matter? Can it be said that there is in the Church of to-day a passionate love of truth, a desire to pursue truth to the uttermost, a profound respect for honest thought and inquiry? Would a visitor from Mars who attended our Church Assemblies, or dipped into our religious newspapers, or into the letters and articles written from the Church point of view in secular newspapers, be likely to conclude that an eager disposition to welcome new truth from whatever quarter it comes, to enquire into new opinions or alleged discoveries, to be scrupulously fair to opponents—would such a visitor be likely

to note these qualities as conspicuous features in the average religious mind of our age? Would he not probably carry away the impression that doubt and intellectual open-mindedness, the patient search for truth and the willingness to face truth when found, were regarded by too many religious persons as extremely dangerous things, if not as deadly sins?

What is the education which we give to our clergy? Even when their previous general education has been good, what professional education do they get? Are the great problems which a clergyman has to face so easy that, whereas a doctor requires five years' professional education at the very least, two years' or, in the case of graduates, one year's study at a theological college is sufficient to fit a man even for meeting the difficulties which any intelligent artisan at the present day would be capable of suggesting to him? And what is the standard of competency secured by the examination for Holy Orders? I think I could give you a fairly correct idea of the

amount of knowledge insisted on for the clergy—of course I am only speaking of the indispensable minimum—by saying that it is probably equivalent to the knowledge of Science and Medicine expected of a trained nurse, with the difference that the nurse's information is tolerably up to date as far as it goes, while the parson's is by no means always so. Happily many of us go on reading and thinking after we are ordained ; but it cannot be assumed that the majority in any profession will succeed in making up by private effort for the defects of their professional training.

I do not hesitate to say that one of the greatest needs—perhaps the greatest need—of the Church to-day is an improvement in the education of the clergy, and a changed attitude towards intellectual questions on the part, not only of the clergy, but of the religious laity. Without that, not all the devotion of the laborious parochial clergy, not all the subscriptions of the benevolent laity, not all the new organizations and machineries—Assemblies, Finance Boards,

new dioceses, and the rest—will avail to enable the Church to hold its own and do its work in the world of to-day. And observe, there is no safer historical generalization than this—that the opinions which are accepted by the more intellectual people sooner or later spread to the population generally. A Church that has lost its hold over the intellect of the age will not long retain its hold over its emotional life or its practical activities.

I know that there will be some people who will meet these suggestions with a simple negative. There are a few people who will say "The teaching of the Church has always been and must always be the same. If the world will not accept the Church's message, so much the worse for the world. The clergy are not to be blamed because they refuse to water down their teaching to suit the infidelity of the age; and this infidelity, it will further be suggested, is only the outcome of the peculiar and exceptional wickedness which distinguishes this period of the world's

history from all others." Or perhaps the whole matter will be summarily disposed of by the suggestion that all new ideas in theology were made in Germany, and therefore must be wrong.

As regards certain things, of course every Christian must admit that there is an unchangeable basis of the Church's teaching. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." But unfortunately the Church is constantly mistaking for the essentials of its faith things which are mere accidents of it. It is a profound historical mistake—a pure mistake of fact—to suppose that the Church's teaching has always been the same on all subjects. The Church would have been dead long ago if it had been, and the promise that the Holy Spirit would ever lead the Church on to new truth would have failed. The Church has always—and most of all in the ages in which its influence has been most profound and most vital—been adapting its teaching to meet the advance of knowledge in other directions. I could easily show you, had

I the time, that the Church's teaching has never been exactly the same during any two centuries of its existence—except perhaps in the very darkest of the dark ages.

I will not attempt to illustrate that proposition from the Church's earlier history. But I should like to remind you of the changes which have taken place in average religious teaching within the memory of men who are not yet very old. The most fundamental of all these changes has been an altered way of looking at the Bible. Many of us were brought up to believe that every word of the Bible was true from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation.

Where is the instructed theologian of any school who teaches that now? The most conservative scholarly theologian of the present day is, I suppose, Dr. Wace, the aged Dean of Canterbury. What does he say about the Bible? I heard him speak on the subject at a Diocesan Conference at Birmingham some few years ago. He told us that the Bible is *substantially*

true from cover to cover. Substantially true. There is a great difference between "substantially true" and "literally true, every word of it, equally in all its parts," in matters of Science and of History as well as in matters of Spiritual Truth. And if the Dean were to have set forth these particulars—the unscientific account of Creation, details of history, minor contradictions, and the like—which he would probably admit, the applause with which that utterance was greeted would perhaps have been a little qualified.

At all events, even such admissions would probably have seemed startling enough to our grandfathers. We used to be told that, if you admit one mistake, if you admit that the world took more than six days to make, and that the fossils do not lie, or that the story of Jonah is only a parable, you will have no ground left for believing in the Divinity of our Lord. Who would talk like that now?

And of course everyone knows that the great majority of modern scholars—whether

they call themselves High-Churchmen or Evangelicals, Moderates or Liberals—go much further than the venerable Dean of Canterbury would go in accepting the conclusions of modern Biblical criticism. The imperfect and progressive character of the Old Testament revelation is universally admitted. Instead of being a book equally authoritative in all its parts, the Bible is regarded as the record of God's gradual self-revelation of Himself to the soul of man—a gradual self-revelation leading up to and culminating in that full, sufficient, and (in a sense) final Revelation of Himself which God has made to the world in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this change of attitude towards the Bible has brought with it another. No modern theologian has done more to help men of this age to retain their belief in the fundamental truths of Christianity in spite of our changed attitude towards the Bible than Dr. Charles Gore, at one time Bishop of Birmingham. And when in the book of essays called *Lux Mundi*, which appeared

twenty-eight years ago, he attempted to show how it was possible to accept the views of modern scholars as to the date and authorship of Scriptural books, without giving up his firm belief in the Catholic faith, he found himself met with the difficulty that our Lord Himself apparently sanctions the traditional views. Our Lord treats David as the author of the 110th Psalm, which modern critics assign to a much later date, and possibly assumes that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. And therefore Dr. Gore felt driven to revive the ancient view as to the limitation in our Lord's human knowledge, which had practically been forgotten by most religious people, though it had never been formally condemned.

The moment we come seriously to think of it, we must surely recognize that the idea of the incarnation of God in a human soul really implies that the Incarnate submitted to those limitations which are inherent in the nature of humanity. That was no new doctrine. It is asserted by some of the

great Fathers of the Church. It is one that can only be denied by contradicting our Lord's own assertion that He did not know the day or the hour of the Judgement, and the Gospel statement that He increased in wisdom. The doctrine was old enough, and orthodox enough, but that did not prevent violent attacks in the Church papers upon the orthodoxy and the honesty of Dr. Gore. By many he was told that his plain duty was to resign his position as a clergyman, and so on. At the present day there are probably very few bishops and still fewer theologians who do not agree with him on this subject.

Let me take one more illustration of the change that has already taken place in average clerical opinion. I can remember the time when any doubt about the eternity of future punishment—of literal endless torture—was something that could only be whispered or hinted at. To avow such doubts was the note of the thorough-going Broad-Churchman. Maurice lost his professorship for it in 1853. Dean Farrar

was fiercely attacked for boldly preaching against the old view in 1877. At the present day I find that in any ordinary clerical gathering you may assume the gospel of eternal hope with general agreement; or at all events it is treated as a perfectly allowable opinion.

Now in the face of such changes it is too late to contend that the Church has always taught the same things, and that the clergyman who departs one hair's breadth from this or that ancient formula has no place in the ministry of the Church. We do wrong to think of Christianity as a fixed, stereotyped body of doctrine. It is, and has always been, a living, growing, evolving thing, ever reaching out after and absorbing new truth and pushing on to higher and higher conceptions of God, and fuller and wider insight into the true and eternal meaning of the full revelation of Himself which God once for all made of Himself in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But someone will say, "If the Church has already so far remodelled and adapted

its teaching to the new light which God has given us, why do you complain that she is not facing the difficulties of the age? Why is there still this discrepancy between the teaching of the pulpit and the mind of the age?"

In answer to this suggestion I would say two things:

(1) Though these ideas which are most clearly opposed to modern science and modern Biblical scholarship have been silently dropped, the contrary views are very seldom preached with any distinctness. It is only in rather limited circles that the new ideas have spread. Thousands are kept back from Christianity because they still suppose that the clergy teach that every word of the Bible is historically true, and that all the miracles of the Old Testament must be accepted just as they stand, that the morality of the Old Testament is as perfect as that of the New, and that you cannot be a Christian without thinking so. That is still assumed in nearly all the more popular attacks upon Christianity and in

some of the more educated ones. When by some accident some view long quite familiar to scholars finds its way into the newspapers and becomes the subject of popular controversy, it soon becomes evident that the ideas even of the most orthodox and conservative scholars are still not accepted by many clergymen, and are quite unknown to the letter-writers and leader-writers in newspapers, who come forward on such occasions as the champions of the Church. Two-thirds of the violent things which have been said against the readers of papers at a recent Conference of Modern Churchmen at Cambridge might with equal truth have been said against Bishop Gore and his friends.

(2) And then we cannot assume that the process of development by which we have all been influenced to a greater or a lesser extent must cease with the publication of *Lux Mundi*, or at the point where our own personal difficulties may chance to end. Historical research and theological thought are continually going on. New problems must be faced as well as old ones. Younger

people will ask questions which their fathers were contented not to ask. And their difficulties cannot be met, if every fresh attempt to explain an ancient formulary, every departure from conventional opinion, is to be met by yells of condemnation from a thousand pulpits and a hundred local newspapers. You will observe I say "departure from conventional opinion." For very often the opinion attacked is not opposed even to the letter of the Church's formularies. Sometimes it is really part of the orthodox teaching of the Church, and those who attack it are the real heretics. When, for instance, people are shocked at being told that our Lord had a human soul and a human will, they only show that they do not know the Church's own doctrine The favourite document of the dogmatists, the Athanasian Creed, could teach them better. "Perfect God and perfect man, and of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

A reasonable soul means, of course, a reasonable human soul.

But I do not wish to get into the discussion of any particular opinions. The great obstacle to a readjustment of the relations between theological dogma and modern knowledge is not so much any particular difference of opinion as the existence in too many Christians of a wholly wrong attitude towards thought and knowledge, a fierce antagonism to new opinions—that is to say, to any opinions of which they do not happen to have heard—a fixed conviction that all theological ideas other than the conventional ones are due to conceit or personal vanity or gross unspirituality of mind in those who suggest them, and a disposition to cry out for some sort of vengeance against them, even before it is known what the poor men have actually said.

In the moderate words of one of our most prominent Assistant Chaplains-General during the war, Dr. Neville Talbot, now Bishop of Pretoria: "There is a great danger to-day in the exaltation of religious devotion and activity over love of the truth.

During the last sixty years so much of the best and most intense achievements, whether Evangelical or Catholic, have been reared on a basis of reactionary thought." That this should be altered is one of the greatest, if not the greatest need of our Church to-day.

And here, perhaps, I may be asked: "How does all this concern *us*? You have been preaching upon the duties of the clergy, and we can't reform the clergy, even if they want reforming." It is a very great mistake to suppose that these matters concern the clergy only. Each of you has something to do to bring his own belief into harmony with whatever he possesses of modern knowledge. There are many people whose practical Christian faith would be immensely strengthened, and its influence over their lives intensified, if they were to take the trouble to read and inquire a little more about the Bible and the truth which it contains. A vague consciousness of difficulties felt, but not faced, is often a great source

of religious indecision and practical inefficiency.

And especially is this duty incumbent upon those who have in any way to teach others. I am afraid that the new light has influenced the ordinary currents of religious teaching in the home, the Sunday-school, the day-school, the Bible-class, less even than it has affected the teaching of the pulpit. Children are still too often taught antiquated views, the denunciation of which gives an easy triumph to Mr. Blatchford and the Rationalist Press Association. Many parents go on teaching children what they do not quite believe themselves; or they teach them nothing at all about religion, because they are not quite sure what they do believe themselves. The more boldly we face difficulties, the more, I believe, we shall discover the unique and imperishable value of that supreme revelation of God's nature which has been made to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The revelation is, in a sense, always the same; but the apprehension of it is gradual

and progressive. Over and over again it has been discovered that the true meaning and significance of Christ's teaching and work become all the clearer and all the more life-giving when the incrustations of human traditions have been stripped off. Let us try to take seriously the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is teaching something —something important and something new —to the Church of our own generation; and let us—each in proportion to his leisure, his vocation, and his opportunities—try to discover what it is, and to do what we can to communicate to others whatever measure of truth God has revealed to us and to the Church of our day. Now, as in former times, the Holy Spirit of God is saying to us: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

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# NOTE

In attributing a Monothelite tendency to the Bishop of Zanzibar on p. 15, I had in mind such passages as the following:

"If he [the Bishop of Durham] does believe that the Eternal Word is the only centre of consciousness, of thought, *and of will* [the italics mine] in Jesus; the only person, self, or ego . . . if, I say, Dr. Henson means this—well, there are few writers or preachers better able than himself to have made this meaning clear" (*The Christ and His Critics*, p. 114; cf. also p. 125).

In *The One Christ*, ed. i, pp. 169–74, 266–77, it is true that the Bishop quite distinctly asserts the doctrine of two wills in Christ, but even in the chapters to which he has referred me there are passages which I find it hard to reconcile with that doctrine.

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